The Minister and his Peace
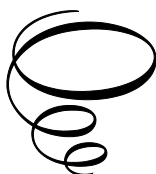
The Minister and his Peace:

Lord Shelburne, the British Pamphlet Press and the Peace of Paris, 1783

By

Rory T. Cornish

For Rachael and our Matilda

**William Fitzmaurice-Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne
(1737-1805)**
Engraving published in 1780 by Fielding and Walker,
London (New York Public Library,
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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On June 17, 2019, a correspondent to *The Irish Times* corrected a misconception made by a previous correspondent that the Duke of Wellington had been the first Irish born British prime minister. Lord Shelburne, he correctly noted, had been born in Dublin and whose brief premiership had been largely concerned with ending the American War of Independence, or what this correspondent referred to as "Amerexit". A member of the Fitzmaurice family which had dominated County Kerry for twenty-two generations, Shelburne's administration lasted for only 266 days in which the independence of the United States was formally recognized. The signing of the peace preliminaries with America in 1782, and with France and Spain in January 1783, was the crowning achievement of his long political career, but Shelburne's character has baffled historians. Disliked and distrusted by many of his contemporaries, the historian, novelist, and leading Anti-Jacobin writer, Robert Bisset, noted a year before Shelburne's death that if he was a man of considerable knowledge he would have been better suited for "some secondary department" for which his vast abundance of exact knowledge would have been more useful.[1] Benjamin Disraeli, who had also climbed the greasy pole to the premiership, nonetheless considered Lord Shelburne to have been one of the ablest and most accomplished first ministers of the eighteenth-century.

Due to his Irish birth Shelburne considered himself as something of an outsider. If well known by his contemporaries for entertaining, and even sometimes financially supporting, some of the leading intellectual figures of his day, many of his subordinates and close associates were also from Britain's Celtic fringe. His long-term private secretary, Maurice Morgann was Welsh, as was Joseph Jekyll MP, and one of his undersecretaries, Evan Nepean was of mixed Cornish and Welsh heritage. Thomas Orde, another of his undersecretaries, was from Northumberland, while Isaac Barré, Lauchlin Macleane and William Greatrakes, another of

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[1] Robert Bisset, *The History of the Reign of George III to the Termination of the Last War*, 4 Vols. (Baltimore; Edward S. Coale, 1810), Vol.2: 451. The work was first published in 1804 in Edinburgh and London.

Shelburne's private secretaries, were all born in Ireland. Lord Shelburne awaits a modern biographer capable of synthesising and comprehending the vast collection of his existing personal papers and voluminous correspondence. This present study offers another dimension to his career; how both he and his peace were considered by the contemporary pamphlet press.

In the last few years historians have again concentrated on the careers of the good and great as prime movers in eighteenth-century British politics. Consequently, the pamphlet press has often been dismissed as little more than political propaganda. In light of our own twenty-first century's obsession with fake news the time seems apt to revisit the research of a number of previous historians who indicated just how the eighteenth-century pamphlet press impacted British politics. Indeed, the pamphlet press could help make or break a political career as clearly illustrated by the popularity of John Wilkes and the unpopularity of Lord Bute. It certainly damaged Shelburne's reputation for the press attacks on his private character tended to undermine his achievement in finally bringing a peaceful conclusion to the war between Britain and her American colonies.

The research for this study began some years ago after I delivered an academic paper on the British pamphlet press and the Peace of Paris at the Southern Conference for British Studies in Richmond, Virginia. Other projects, including books on the career of George Grenville, Thomas Francis Meagher, and book chapters on the Irish involvement in the American Civil War, deflected my attention away from this topic which, when resumed, increasingly became a study of Lord Shelburne and the press. Eighteenth-century spelling and the use of capitalization is at variance with modern usage. To be consistent in this study I have followed eighteenth-century rather than modern diction, but as the titles of some pamphlets are excessively long I have occasionally abridged a number of titles.

In completing this study I wish to thank the staff of The William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, The British Library, London, The National Archives, Kew, and The Wellcome Collection, London, especially Amelia Walker, its senior library assistant, for her help which greatly improved the content of the last three chapters of this book. A deep debt of gratitude is also extended to the late historian and librarian of the John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island, Thomas R. Adams (1921-2008). His monumental two volume bibliographical

work, *The American Controversy: A Bibliographical Study of the British Pamphlets About the American Revolution* published in 1980, was of immeasurable value to this present study. My thanks are also extended to Adam Rummers of *CSP* for both commissioning this study and his support as I endeavoured to complete the work on time. I would also like to thank Amanda Millar, The Typesetting Manager at *CSP*, for her professional expertise in formatting the manuscript.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank Dr. John Martin Hearne of Waterford, Ireland, who read and corrected the first chapter of this work, and Serena Kelly of London who read the whole manuscript and whose corrections and comments greatly improved its content. Any remaining errors in this study are entirely my own responsibility. Serena's equally generous hospitality also allowed me to complete numerous research trips to The British Library, London. My eternal thanks are extended to my wife Rachael for her constant support in sustaining my academic career and who once more tolerated my continual absent-mindedness over the last two years while I completed another book. Rachael also helped organize the manuscript before it was sent to the publisher and, together with our Matilda, has made my life more enjoyable.

<div style="text-align: right">Prince Edward Island, April 2024.</div>

ABBREVIATIONS

Add Mss	Additional Manuscripts
AHR	*American Historical Review*
BL	British Library, London
CO	Colonial Office Papers
ECL	*Eighteenth-Century Life*
HER	*English Historical Review*
HMC	Historical Manuscript Commission
HOC	*The History of Parliament: The House of Commons (1754-1790)*
JBS	*Journal of British Studies*
JEC	*Journal of Economic History*
Knox Mss	The William Knox Papers, William L. Clements Library
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 Vols.
PA	*Parliamentary History*
Shel Mss	Shelburne Papers, William L. Clements Library
THJ	*The History Journal*
TIHR	*The International History Review*
TNA	The National Archives, London
W&MQ	*William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series

CHAPTER ONE

LORD SHELBURNE AND THE HISTORIAN: VISIONARY OR INTELLECTUAL MAGPIE?

On December 9, 1762, a young and ambitious Lord Shelburne rose in the House of Lords to recommend the preliminary peace terms negotiated by the Bute administration. The peace terms had been hotly debated in both Parliament and the press for their unpopularity was partially due to a widely held aversion many contemporaries felt towards the first minister, Lord Bute. Shelburne could not have foreseen that this early foray into British politics would link him to American affairs for the next twenty years of his career, a career culminating with his own unpopular American peace preliminaries signed in November 1782 recognizing the independence of the United States.[1] If the first Peace of Paris launched Shelburne's political career, the second would ruin it. He was only forty-five at the time of his resignation as first minister in February 1783, and although advanced in the peerage to the Marquisate of Lansdowne in 1784, he would never again hold office.

Distrusted by many of his political contemporaries and disliked by many of his subordinates especially by some of his undersecretaries including William Knox, Sir Stainer Porten, Richard Sutton, and his junior secretary at the Treasury, George Rose, Shelburne's character has perplexed modern historians. Having failed to attract a biographer during the Namerite high-tide of British post-war scholarship, he remains the least studied first minister of the reign of George III and perhaps the greatest enigma in eighteenth-century British politics.[2] Something of an aristocratic maverick, a loner who preferred conversations with many of the more radical thinkers of his day than with his political colleagues, his political beliefs have defied a convenient assessment. He was, as a contemporary critic noted in 1782, a Whig in theory but a Tory in practice

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[1] The definitive peace treaty would be finally signed in September 1783.
[2] His speech on the 1763 Peace of Paris is in Shelburne Mss. 165: 309-21: H.M. Scott, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 323.

whose policies were so "judiciously ambiguous, that no man can ascertain their quality" to the extent that he sometimes is "absolutely *nothing*, and may be occasionally, *anything*." [3]

Before the bicentennial of the 1783 Peace of Paris refocused attention on Shelburne's role in British and international politics only one full biography of Shelburne had been completed. Published in the 1850s, *The Life of William Earl of Shelburne* was a three-volume study written by a great-grandson, Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice. In 1963 this was joined by the then only modern monograph on Shelburne's role in domestic politics, John Norris's Shelburne *and Reform*. To these was added *The Chathamites* published in 1967 by Peter D. Brown. Intended as a joint biography of William Pitt, later Lord Chatham, and Shelburne, it also included biographical studies of three of Shelburne's political associates; Colonel Isaac Barré, John Dunning, and Dr. Richard Price. If Norris's work helped establish that Shelburne was more interested in economic (administrative) reform than parliamentary reform, to which he may have only paid passing lip-service, *The Chathamites* firmly identified Shelburne as a loyal follower of William Pitt, a dedicated free trader, and an original political thinker in a conservative age.[4] Biographies of the other major political figures, such as Lord Rockingham, Charles Townshend, Charles James Fox, William Pitt the Younger, as well as George III himself, often threw new tangential light on Shelburne's career, as did a number of administrative studies, such as *The Chatham Administration* by John Brooke and *The First Rockingham Administration* by Paul Langford.[5] The political conditions which led to the formation of the second Rockingham administration in 1782, which included Shelburne, were investigated by Ian R. Christie in *The End of the North Ministry, 1780-82* and the collapse of the Shelburne administration was explored by John Cannon in his *The Fox-North Coalition: Crisis of the Constitution 1782-4.*

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[3] (Dennis O'Bryen), *A Defence Of The Rt. Hon. The Earl Of Shelburne, From The Reproaches of His Numerous Enemies; In A Letter To Sir George Saville, Bart.,* (London: Stockdale, 1782), 14.

[4] Peter Brown, *The Chathamites: A Study in the Relationship Between Personalities and Ideas in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 104.

[5] For example see, Ross J.F. Hoffman, *The Marquis: A Study of Lord Rockingham* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1973); Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke, *Charles Townshend* (London: Macmillan, 1964); L.G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Marie Peters, *The Elder Pitt*, (London: Longman, 1998), and Jeremy Black, *George III: America's Last King* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

Until quite recently the international diplomacy relating to the treaty was dominated by the earlier works of a number of American historians and a historian of the British Empire, Vincent T. Harlow, whose emphasis on Shelburne as a free trader was echoed by the American historian, Clarence W. Alvord.[6] The American diplomatic historians, Samuel Flagg Bemis and Richard Morris, portrayed the peace negotiations as little more than a one-sided victory for the American negotiators. Morris's monumental tome, *The Peacemakers*, is now often interpreted as little more than a Yankee morality play; a tale of American exceptionalism in which the cunning American envoys, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and John Adams, outwitted the less intelligent and amoral old world diplomats.[7] Yet, as Bradford Perkins concluded, the American commissioners probably never really understood Shelburne who, he added, was difficult to understand anyway. More recently, Andrew Stockley has dismissed the notion that the Americans were skilled negotiators for during the endgame they conceded more than they had to and, concerning the issue of morality, had themselves acted in bad faith by not keeping the French minister, Vergennes, the Spanish, or the Dutch diplomats informed of the extent of their separate negotiations with the British. As for diplomatic skills and intelligence, he concluded, the generous terms extended to the Americans were due almost entirely to the personality and idealism of Britain's first minister, Lord Shelburne.[8] Nonetheless, the great British statesman thesis of the Harlow-Alvord school, that Shelburne was an unorthodox and intellectually curious aristocrat, has also undergone something of a reappraisal in recent years.

During the preliminary peace negotiations Shelburne has also been portrayed as a minister interested in the possibility that free trade, unencumbered by tariff and custom duties, could usher in a new dawn of international cooperation and a peaceful future. At the core of this thesis is

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[6] Vincent T. Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire, 1763-1793*, 2 vols., (London: Longman, 1952), Vol.1, 440-441; Clarence W. Alvord, *Lord Shelburne and the Founding of British-American Goodwill. The Raleigh Lecture on History, British Academy, 1918* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), 13-26.
[7] Alexander Deconde, 'Historians and the American War of Independence and the Persistence of the Exceptionalist Idea', *TIHR*, 5 (1983), 399-341.
[8] Bradford Perkins, 'The Peace of Paris: Patterns and Legacies', in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (eds.), *Peace and the Peacemakers. The Treaty of 1783* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986), 220; Andrew Stockley, *Britain and France at the Birth of America: The European Powers and the Peace Negotiations of 1782-1783* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), 65-67, 73.

the belief that Shelburne was greatly influenced by the ideas of Adam
Smith, yet in his early biography Lord Fitzmaurice noted this economist
was only mentioned twice; when in 1801 Shelburne began his unfinished
autobiography he noted Smith's ideas had remained unanswered for over
thirty years, and later in a letter to his friend, the French economist André
Morellet, when he wrote "I have not changed an atom of the principles I
first imbibed from you, and Adam Smith. They make a woefully slow
progress, but I cannot look at them as extinct; on the contrary they must
prevail in the end like the sea."[9]

        In a 1985 paper on the impact the American Revolution had on
British politics, Alison G. Olsen proposed that Shelburne had, however,
been surprisingly conventional in his diplomacy; while at the same
conference Andrew S. Skinner argued Adam Smith had initially supported
the American war and was anything but perfectly orthodox in his views
regarding American trade.[10] Shelburne had known Smith since the 1760s,
yet there is little remaining evidence in Shelburne's papers to suggest
Adam had an important influence on him during the peace negotiations, or
that Shelburne had even read *The Wealth of Nations*. Charles R. Ritcheson
in contemplating this concluded it was probably Abbé Morellet who may
have helped liberalize Shelburne's ideas by his more simplistic interpretation
of Josiah Tucker's theory that cheap manufactured goods, plentiful capital,
and Britain's advances in manufacturing technology would secure her a
dominant trading role with an independent United States.[11] Though he
admired Shelburne, the historian H.M. Scott also questioned Shelburne's
radical credentials by suggesting he was something of an aristocratic
dilettante who liked to pepper his conversation with radical chic concepts
without really understanding them. This is not to say that Shelburne was
indifferent to principles for, on the contrary Scott added, he collected them
enthusiastically and even attempted to implement them, but then just as
easily discarded them. It was this flexibility which convinced many

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[9] Edmond Fitzmaurice, *Life of William, Earl of Shelburne, Afterwards First Marquess of Lansdowne*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1875-1876), Vol.I: 24 and 3: 566.
[10] Alison G. Olson, 'British Politics in the Wake of the American Revolution', in Prosser Gifford (ed.), *The Treaty of Paris (1783) in a Changing State System* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1985) 53; Andrew S. Skinner, 'Adam Smith: The Demise of the Colonial Relationship with America,' Ibid., 24-33. Both these papers were presented at a symposium at The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, January 26-27, 1984.
[11] Charles R. Ritcheson, 'The Earl of Shelburne and Peace with America, 1782-1783. Vision and Reality,' *TIHR*, 5 (1983), 343-344.

contemporaries that he was little more than a cynical opportunist who was capable of holding two conflicting and irreconcilable opinions at the same time, a characteristic which helped underscore Shelburne's unenviable reputation for insincerity.[12] As another contemporary critic noted, Shelburne possessed "dexterity in the art of conveying a falsehood in the words of truth."[13]

Shelburne often spoke in generalities and was often vague about details to the extent that his line of thought was perhaps more impressionistic than systematic. This served him well for he was an effective and skilful political in-fighter which, of course, only tended to infuriate his critics even further. His preference to work in secret with a few trusted subordinates, such as his private secretary Maurice Morgann, also annoyed his colleagues, as did his decision while first minister to rarely meet his cabinet colleagues as a strategy to give the illusion of uniformity among them. A complex man with many unresolved contradictions, there was a darker side to his personality for he could be charming in private but unattractively sarcastic in public.[14] In his unfinished autobiographical sketch Shelburne regretted his poor education which, historians have suggested, may have led to his insecurity which manifested itself in his effort to constantly flatter those he wished to cultivate. As one critic noted, every syllable he uttered, every gesture of his body, and every motion of his face "are accompanied with a design to invite the indifferent, to conciliate the hostile, or flatter the friendly by an indefatigable assiduity, by a politeness that perseveres and a smile that never ceases."[15] Similarly, David Hartley warned John Adams that "Shelburne is an Irishman and has all the impudence of his nation. He is a palaverer beyond description. He palavers everybody and has no

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[12] H.M. Scott, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution*, 323-325.

[13] (-), *An Examination into The Principles, Conduct, And Designs Of The Earl of Shelburne* (London: Stockdale, 1783), 5.

[14] Ibid., 323; John Cannon, *The Fox-North Coalition: Crisis of the Constitution, 1782-4* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 37; Charles R. Ritcheson, 'The Earl of Shelburne and Peace with America,' 323.

[15] (O'Bryen), *A Defence Of The Rt.Hon. The Earl Of Shelburne*, 10. Shelburne's use of language, his politeness and flattery have been reassessed as a method by which he attempted to strengthen his aristocratic credentials and articulate a leadership role for the aristocrat. See, Lawrence C. Klein, 'Sociability, Politeness, and Aristocratic Self- Formation in the Life and Career of the Second Earl of Shelburne', *THJ*, 55 (2012), 653-677.

sincerity."[16] Shelburne initially left Ireland in 1755, but at a critical period in her later history he would play an important role in Ireland's future. The owner of a vast Irish landed estate, he was not a typical absentee landlord for he took an interest in his properties, his tenants, and re-visited Ireland five times from 1764 to 1775. Nonetheless, he personally alienated many of his Irish political colleagues in a similar way he had managed to do in England. [17]

William Fitzmaurice was born in Dublin in May 1737, the eldest son of John Fitzmaurice and his wife, Mary Fitzmaurice, a cousin and the daughter of Colonel William Fitzmaurice of Gallane. The Fitzmaurice's arrived in Ireland with Richard de Clare (Strongbow), Earl of Pembroke, in the twelfth century, were later granted 100,000 acres in Ireland by Henry II, and for twenty-two generations the Fitzmaurice family as barons Kerry had dominated the county. In 1692, his grandfather, Thomas Fitzmaurice (1668-1741) the twenty-first Baron Kerry, married Anne Petty (1671-1737), an "ugly woman, who bought into the family whatever degree of sense may have appeared in it, or whatever wealth is likely to remain in it." The daughter of Sir William Petty and his wife Elizabeth, who in 1688 became in her own right Baroness Shelburne in the peerage of Ireland.[18] Sir William Petty, economist, scientist, and physician, had accompanied Cromwell to Ireland in 1652 as physician-general to the army. He was later employed to complete the Down Survey which chartered the confiscated Irish lands redistributed to Cromwell's soldiers and financiers in which Petty himself received over 30,000 acres in Kenmare, County Kerry. He was later knighted by Charles II, became a founding member of The Royal Society in 1660 and, following his return to Ireland in 1666, of the Dublin Society in 1682. His daughter Anne was one of the few people able to manage her quarrelsome husband, later 1st Earl of Kerry, who tyrannized both his tenants and family in equal measure. Her two brothers, Charles Petty, 1st Baron Shelburne, and Henry Petty, 1st Earl Shelburne, both died childless and under the terms of Henry

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[16] Cited in Brown, *The Chathamites*, 90.
[17] Martyn J. Powell, 'Shelburne and Ireland: Politician, Patriot, and Absentee,' in *An Enlightenment Statesman in Whig Britain: Lord Shelburne in Context, 1737-1805*, eds. Nigel Aston and Clarissa Campbell Orr (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boyden Press, 2011), 141-159.
[18] Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, I: 1-3: The Last Will of Sir William Petty, Founder of the Noble House of Shelburne, *The European Magazine*, 2 (1782), 108-111; *The Universal Magazine*, new series, Vol.5 (1806), Sketch of Lord Henry Petty, 385-386.

Petty's will of April 1751, John Fitzmaurice, Anne's second son, inherited the wealth, estates, and property of his uncle on condition he adopted the Petty name. In the same year he became Baron Dunkerron and Viscount Fitzmaurice, and in 1753 was created Earl Shelburne in the Irish peerage. More importantly for his political career, in 1760 he was created Baron Wycombe in the British peerage through the influence of Henry Fox, a distant relation by marriage, which allowed him, and later his son, to take their seat in the British House of Lords.[19]

While his mother was ambitiously advancing his father's political career in England William initially stayed with his grandfather and for four years he ran wild in Kerry. If he had little positive to say about his parents in his later autobiographical fragment he remained grateful for the affection shown to him by his father's sister, Lady Arabella Fitzmaurice, later Lady Denny. It was her alone, he later claimed, who had alleviated "the domestic brutality and ill-usage I daily experienced at home" and who had helped to educate him to a "sense of duty toward God, the publick, and my neighbours which has never quitted me."[20] In the most recent comprehensive study of Shelburne to date, *An Enlightenment Statesman in Whig Britain*, the editors have suggested the Atlantic perspective has for too long dominated the discussion of Shelburne's career. In an attempt to reintroduce the relevance of high politics to modern scholarship the essays collected in this work have reviewed Shelburne through many different, and previously unexplored, lenses. In considering gender issues, extended family relationships, political geography, material culture, as well as revisiting the importance of the Bowood Circle, a more rounded and fuller image of Shelburne has emerged, especially concerning the influence his aunts and wives had on his character, his political views, court connections, religious beliefs, and his reputation for philanthropy. His important, but hitherto largely ignored, relationship with his younger brother, Thomas Fitzmaurice, was also reconsidered.

Shelburne may have lived the life of a grandee with two great estates in England, a palatial London townhouse, and massive Irish

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[19] Ibid. 1-2; Nigel Aston, 'Irish or English? The Rise of John Fitzmaurice Petty in the 1750s', *ECL*, 39 (2015), 155-182. For an interesting contemporary account of Shelburne's life see, *The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, XXII (1782), 233-235.
[20] On Lady Arabella Denny see, Clarissa C. Orr 'Aunts, Wives, Courtiers: The Ladies of Bowood,' in *An Enlightenment Statesman*, 52-61; also see, 4-8, 10 and 13-15.

acreage, but all was not as it seemed for in his seminal essay on Shelburne's finances John Orbell discussed Shelburne's continual money problems. Often considerably in debt, even Lord Bute had loaned him £16,500, it was only due to the later close money management of Sir Francis Baring that Shelburne was later saved from total financial disaster.[21] Nigel Ashton in his essay on Shelburne and his brother outlined how the astonishing rise of the Shelburne family from an Irish earldom to a British marquisate in a single generation was entirely due to the Petty inheritance.

What was previously less understood is how both Shelburne and his father had attempted to use the Petty connection to remodel the Fitzmaurice family as being English; a dynastic reinvention Shelburne continued by his first marriage to Lady Sophia Carteret, a daughter of Earl Granville. Significantly, when elevated to his marquisate Shelburne chose the title Lansdowne which reflected his first wife's ancestry and the lands near Bath she had brought to the marriage.[22] Nonetheless, the Petty inheritance came to haunt him when a political opponent in 1782 indicated Shelburne was descended from a Cromwellian swindler who had cheated the Irish out of their lands and, as a consequence, was largely hated in his native land; an accusation strongly denied by a Shelburne apologist who countered that Shelburne was loved in Ireland, especially by his tenants. He was a statesman born for "the service of the two countries" who, while in Ireland had visited all his estates, examined the circumstances of his tenants, and when some were found to be in distress he "reduced the rents of some, forgave the arrears of others, and made cash advances to a few."[23]

Later in life Shelburne contemplated the complexities of how different influences moulded an individual and one of the most important influences on Shelburne suggested by historians was his attachment to the Elder Pitt, although Frank O'Gorman has recently suggested if this perhaps was a loadstar in Shelburne's career it may not have been the

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[21] John Orbell, 'Lord Shelburne, Finance, and Sir Francis Baring,' in *An Enlightenment Statesman*, 97-113.

[22] Nigel Aston, 'Petty and Fitzmaurice: Lord Shelburne and his Brother', Ibid' 29-50.

[23] (O'Bryen), *A Defence Of The Rt. Hon. The Earl Of Shelburne*, 33-35: (-), *A Short But Serious Reply To The Author Of A (Mock) Defence Of The Earl of Shelburne* (London: Payne, 1782), 12-13.

single most dominant influence upon it.[24] Shelburne may have inherited the leadership of the Chathamites following Pitt's death in 1778, but he had never been Pitt's servant for his role was something more akin to an associate; something of an enlightened, independent Whig struggling to assert himself in a political world dominated by the king, his ministers, and, of course, Pitt himself.[25] If Shelburne did have a mentor, Charles R. Ritcheson has provocatively suggested, it was not the Elder Pitt but Oliver Cromwell. Shelburne was certainly ambitious and was determined to find employment, if not for profit then "one suitable to my rank and capacity, such as it is."[26] Today one would suggest he was a young man in a hurry and he could have easily been writing about himself, rather than Pitt, when he noted he had "either sacrificed or kept down every other passion with a view to forward his ambition." Or, as the king dryly remarked to Lord Bute in June 1762, Shelburne was a man who once dissatisfied will go to any lengths to fulfil his intent.[27]

Restless in his studies at Christ Church, Oxford, disgruntled by his unhappy home life, and with no prospect of a "decent allowance to go abroad," even though his family provided him with an annuity of £600 per annum, when "war broke out; I determined upon going into the army; luckily my father, by the advice of Mr. Fox, placed me in the 20th Regiment, where I came under General Wolfe."[28] Both his Irish grandfathers had been soldiers, and Shelburne had a notable military career during the Seven Years' War. He served in the 1757 naval expedition against Rochefort, was appointed to Lord Granby's staff in Germany, and distinguished himself at the battles of Minden in 1759 and Kloster Kampen in October 1760. By the end of 1760, he was commissioned a

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[24] Cited in Frank O' Gorman, 'Shelburne: A Chathamite,' in *An Enlightenment Statesman*, 118.

[25] Ibid., 139: John Norris, *Shelburne and Reform* (London, Macmillan, 1963), 17-18.

[26] Shelburne to Lord Bute, April 23, 1761; cited in Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne* I: 104: Ritcheson, "The Earl of Shelburne and Peace with America," 325. On Shelburne's praise for Cromwell in the House of Lords see, William Cobbett, *The Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to 1803*, Vols. 36 (London: Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 18: 852.

[27] Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne,* I:73: George III to Bute cited in John Cannon, 'William Petty (1737-1805)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004: later cited as the *ODNB*.

[28] Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, I: 92-93. Shelburne did not resign his commission and although he did not pursue a military career by the process of seniority he became a major general in 1765 and was a full general by 1783.

colonel at just twenty-three and was appointed an aide-de-camp to George III. Such early preferment did not go unnoticed, nor fail to arouse envy, for the Duke of Richmond thought Shelburne's advancement implied a slight to the military reputation of his brother, Lord George Lennox and in protest resigned his court position in the royal bedchamber.[29] Similarly, many in the army viewed Shelburne's rapid promotion as little more than a political job for while on active service he was elected to the House of Commons for the family-controlled seat at Chipping Wycombe in June 1760. Unfortunately for his later career his experience in the Commons was limited for he succeeded to the family peerage following his father's death in May 1761. Both his rapid military and political rise generated concern and envy amongst his contemporaries who quite early on came to see him as something of a slippery fellow.

His political apprenticeship under Lord Bute and Henry Fox, two of the most mistrusted politicians in the first years of the reign of George III, only helped confirm such suspicions as neither Bute nor Fox were a suitable connection for a young politician to make. Although he would later lament it had been his fate to fall in with clever but unpopular connections, he alone chose his associates. Shelburne's father had been an early supporter of Lord Bute and his son's willingness to be a loyal Butean lieutenant was motivated by his own eagerness to help clear out the old political gang.[30] Commenting later on the state of British politics in the thirty years before the reign of George III he was critical of the party system, the constitution, and even the character of previous monarchs. The Duke of Newcastle, he thought, may have been an honest man but the Pelham brothers had a talent for gaining control of the ministry but "none for governing the kingdom" due to their overriding forte for "cunning plausibility and (the) cultivation of mankind." By their long control of government they had become too accustomed to all the "allures of the Court" when increasing luxury and a growing polemical press undermined domestic political principles by corrupting the national character.[31]

Determined to protect a young king from such developments, Lord Bute considered the Old Whigs akin to a levelling republican party; an aristocratic faction who had kept the young king's "grandfather in chains, and were determined to make a mere pageant of the Throne."[32] If

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[29] Ibid., 96-97.
[30] Norris, *Shelburne and Reform*, 9-10
[31] Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, I: 24-26, 33, 49, 51, and 85.
[32] Ibid., 69.

Shelburne's attachment to the king was not reciprocated by George III, Lord Bute's wish to rehabilitate the influence of the crown appealed to the young Shelburne. Gentlemen of independent means, including the Tories, whom Shelburne thought truly represented the landed interest, ought to renew their role as the trustees between the king and his people. They should, as he noted to Bute in May 1762, undertake this "service to both, without becoming slaves to either."[33] During his political apprenticeship Shelburne was perhaps too inexperienced to correctly grasp the dangers inherent in the world of backstairs intrigue, yet he learnt a great deal from both Bute and Fox; from Bute the danger of indecision in high office, and from Fox he gleaned a detailed knowledge of the mechanics of the political system.[34]

Almost immediately upon his return from active service in December 1760, Shelburne began to advise Lord Bute on the forthcoming 1761 election and to prepare him for the expected cabinet tussle with the Duke of Newcastle for place and power. Both the king and Lord Bute disliked Fox, yet he proved to be an invaluable source for useful constituency information which Shelburne passed onto Bute. Indeed, it was Shelburne who had introduced Fox to Bute in February 1761 as the political fixer needed to manage the Commons and build the necessary parliamentary support if Bute was to bring an end to the costly Seven Years' War.[35] His support, however, would come at a price for Fox, who had largely devoted himself to amassing a vast personal fortune as Paymaster-General during the war, requested a peerage in her own right for his wife, Lady Caroline Lennox.

Following the resignation of Lord Holdernesse in March 1761, Bute was appointed to the cabinet as the secretary of state for the Southern Department. Shelburne, however, urged him not to just confine himself to departmental business but to aim at becoming the first minister.[36] Remaining something of an outsider throughout his political career, Shelburne viewed the restoration of the royal prerogative to its proper constitutional role with its power wielded by an enlightened minister as the best means to deliver effective government. This was a role he clearly

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[33] Ibid., 142. For how Bolingbroke's ideas of a patriot king influenced Bute see Jeremy Black, *George III. America's Last King*, 10-14.
[34] Norris, *Shelburne and Reform*, 10.
[35] Sir Lewis Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 144: Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, I: 102.
[36] Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, I: 109.

saw for Bute, Pitt, and perhaps even himself, for there was much in the Bute programme which echoed Bolingbrook's notion of the patriot king. With the backing of the king, and a number of his fellow ministers, Bute managed to outmanoeuvre Pitt in October 1761, and the Duke of Newcastle was forced to resign as first minister in May 1762.[37] Bute, who had secretly reopened the stalled peace negotiations with France, succeeded him and, aided by Fox, who had assumed the leadership of the House of Commons, successfully secured the passage of the peace preliminaries through Parliament.

Shelburne had refused, however, to join the administration and he would later recall his disillusionment with Bute for his temerity in facing the press hostility which helped to finally undermine his premiership. This led him to re-consider Bute as "the greatest political coward I ever knew", despite having "panted for the Treasury" while personally believing himself as "rivalling the Duc de Sully" as a forceful minister. Bute had failed to understand, Shelburne added, that in politics "dealing with mankind was the first thing necessary" if one was to succeed, but Bute proved to be incapable of achieving this.[38] Paradoxically, Shelburne would prove to be equally inept at this for when faced in February 1783 with similar political difficulties he would follow the same path by promptly resigning the premiership. In retrospect, Shelburne was possibly ill-suited to deal with the realities of eighteenth-century British political life for he had possibly been born on the wrong side of the Channel. By temperament he may have been better suited to serve, like Turgot, Pombal, or even Floridablanca, a European enlightened despot rather than George III.[39]

In his first ministerial position at the Board of Trade, April to September 1763, and later as secretary of state for the Southern Department, July 1766 to October 1768, Shelburne was hardly the reformer or the visionary some historians have portrayed him to be. He was certainly intellectually curious, well-read, and industrious, but his reputation for liberalism, especially concerning American colonial affairs, has for too long rested upon his opposition to the Stamp Act, his political association with the Elder Pitt, and his long years in opposition. Both Pitt

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[37] Jeremy Black, *George III. America's Last King*, 10-14. For the Bute administration and George III, see Peter D.G. Thomas, *George III. King and Politicians, 1760-1770* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 31-32, 42-62.

[38] Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, I: 140-141.

[39] Edmond Dziembowski, 'Lord Shelburne's Constitutional Views in 1782-83', in *An Enlightenment Statesman*, 230.

and Shelburne misinterpreted the rising crisis between Britain and her American colonies by incorrectly assuming the Americans objected to the mode of taxation levied by Britain and not the larger core issue of sovereignty. Thus, the notion he acted as the lofty statesman during the 1782 peace negotiations needs some clarification, especially as it fails to embrace the long-term context and continuum which underwrote British eighteenth-century colonial and economic theory. Although sometimes conservative, while occasionally appearing to be more radical, Shelburne nonetheless remained consistent on one thing; a presumptuous sense of entitlement to the prerequisites which accompanied office. In the course of their careers politicians have been known to change, but following his two-year political apprenticeship Shelburne would continue to exhibit personal traits which would undermine his later political career.

        In the negotiations for political office which accompanied Bute's resignation and the formation of the Grenville administration, March to April 1763, Lord Bute supported the young twenty-six-year-old Shelburne as a contender for the office of secretary of state for the Southern Department, an appointment which would have displaced Lord Egremont, George Grenville's brother-in-law. Both the king and Grenville refused to consider this as an option, especially as Grenville, with his usual bluntness, was adamant that the senior lords and politicians who were expected to support his new administration would not accept Shelburne as a secretary of state for he was too young and inexperienced. Shelburne, he reminded Bute, had never previously held office, and despite his family's long prominence in Ireland they had only recently been elevated to the English peerage, and were thus considered to be somewhat arriviste.[40] In March Shelburne refused the offer of the lesser office as first lord at the Board of Trade, but later reconsidered if he were given equal access to the king. It was only after he had been grudgingly granted a seat in the cabinet that Shelburne agreed to serve at the Board of Trade.

        His term of office coincided with the then crucial discussions regarding the future of the enlarged territorial empire in America, what form of government was suitable for the new acquisitions, and how to pay for the army to be garrisoned on the American frontier. Shelburne proved to be an active and attentive departmental minister by attending seventeen

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[40] Grenville to Lord Bute, March 25, 1763, in *The Grenville Papers: Being the Correspondence of Richard Grenville, Earl Temple K.G., and the Rt. Hon. George Grenville. Their Friends and Correspondence*, 4 vols. ed.W.J. Smith (London: John Murray, 1852-1853) 1: 33-40.

of the twenty-one board meetings during his brief tenure, but his efficiency and willingness to do everything himself alienated the more seasoned members of the Board. Ever suspicious of Lord Bute, Grenville distrusted Shelburne and interpreted his activity as evidence Shelburne was secretly Bute's agent intentionally planted in his cabinet, especially as his continual arguments with Lord Egremont over departmental demarcations made him a difficult and irksome colleague.[41] Shelburne questioned both the administration's proposal to tax the colonies and its willingness to prosecute John Wilkes for the publication of *North Briton* No. 45, two policies warmly supported by the king. Shelburne's reputation was further damaged by his role in what was termed the "Pious Fraud" concerning Henry Fox's expected retirement from the Pay Office in return for his long-hoped for peerage. Historians remain undecided as to whether there was a fraud, if Fox had intended to retire, if Shelburne purposely misled Fox, or if Shelburne's own usual vagueness had tended to cloud the whole arrangement. What is not in doubt is Fox's anger over gaining only a baronage and not the earldom he sought. This incident further brought into question Shelburne's veracity for any politician able to out-fox Henry Fox led many of his contemporaries to view Shelburne with even more caution. Indeed, the resulting acrimony, enhanced by Fox's continued accusations that Shelburne was a perfidious and infamous liar did little to lessen Shelburne's growing reputation for hypocrisy and the affair later damaged his relationship with Charles James Fox.[42]

By August 1763, the king had tired of Grenville and attempted to reconstruct the ministry by using Shelburne as emissary between Bute, the Duke of Bedford, and William Pitt. Both rival politicians refused however to serve with the other, but when Lord Egremont suddenly died on August 21, Shelburne was again dispatched to negotiate with Pitt whose terms for returning to office, especially his demand that Grenville's brother Lord Temple be given the Treasury, proved unacceptable to the king.[43] The Grenville administration was temporarily reprieved, but almost immediately Shelburne resigned. His relationship with his cabinet colleagues had been fragile at best, but the king interpreted his resignation as a personal abandonment. When Shelburne complained to Lord Bute concerning how he was attacked in the press concerning his resignation, Bute somewhat

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[41] R.A. Humphreys, 'Lord Shelburne and the Proclamation of 1763', *EHR*, XLIX (1934), 241-64.
[42] Norris, *Shelburne and Reform*, 11-14; Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, Vol.I: 225-229
[43] P.D.G. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 12-13.

unsympathetically reflected "I never doubted that you would come to taste a little of those compliments I have been receiving more or less these seven years" for even after quitting politics "people have told me that I am abused from every quarter."[44] Despite his assurances he would not go into opposition, Shelburne nonetheless opposed the expulsion of John Wilkes from the Commons during the House of Lords debate on November 29, 1763. In retaliation the king removed Shelburne as an aide-de-camp together with two of his political allies, Colonel Barré and John Calcraft, from their minor posts. Shelburne, the king tersely remarked to Grenville, was a "worthless man, and has broken his word with me."[45] It was only with great reluctance the king would he later appoint, at Pitt's insistence, Shelburne as the secretary of state for the Southern Department in July 1766.

Shelburne was no team-player and may have found William Pitt's stand against party influence attractive, yet one ought not to rule out self-interest. As Horace Walpole commented, many reasons were discussed about Shelburne's resignation and political realignment but "the only one that people choose to take is that thinking Pitt must be Minister soon, and finding himself tolerably obnoxious to him he (Shelburne) is seeking to make his peace at any rate."[46] At the outset of his career Shelburne had been strongly prejudiced against Pitt and later reflected that although allies they had never been personally close. Pitt, he complained, continually blamed others for every failure, tended to speak in a high pompous manner, and was "incapable of friendship, or any act which tended to it." As a cabinet colleague, he added, he had not been permitted to visit him without an appointment, never had a five minute conversation with him that did not include business, nor was offered so much as "a glass of water in his house or company."[47]

When Pitt accepted office, together with a peerage as Lord Chatham, there were high hopes of a possible reconciliation with the American colonies and of meaningful reforms in the management of Irish, East Indian, and even domestic affairs. All such hopes would unfortunately come to naught largely due to Lord Chatham's mental and physical collapse

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[44] Bute to Shelburne, September 4, 1763; Shelburne to Bute, September 19, and Bute to Shelburne, September 20, 1763; cited in Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, I: 295-298.
[45] Cited in *The Grenville Papers,* II: 236.
[46] Cited in Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, I: 293.
[47] Ibid., I: 76-78.

in March 1767. Given full control over colonial affairs, Shelburne appointed three additional undersecretaries to his enlarged department but after Chatham's mysterious collapse Shelburne was openly criticised in the press for being an ineffectual member of a rudderless administration. Sidelined in January 1768 by the creation of the American Department, ignored in the cabinet after the Bedfordites joined the administration, Shelburne decided to simply miss cabinet meetings after July 1768 and eventually resigned in October 1768.[48] If he had died then, Shelburne, as John Norris has concluded, would have been written off by most historians as an inexperienced, rather conservative, and unsuccessful secretary of state whose career compared unfavourably to those of his contemporaries; Egremont, Halifax, or even Lord Hillsborough.[49]

The Chatham administration was something of a disappointing failure and Chatham's own career has recently been unfavourably re-evaluated.[50] Similarly, the editors of *An Enlightenment Statesman in Whig Britain* considered Shelburne's own career itself was "ripe for re-examination in a historical world that has taken a cultural turn to which all scholars are committed." A complex man, his career, they noted, has long "cried out" for a more relevant reinterpretation for intellectually he "had no equal among the British nobility."[51] However, as Andrew Stockley commented concerning Shelburne's career, "With Shelburne what you got was never quite what you saw."[52]

The editors of the study also indicated that since the 1970s historical scholarship has followed a tendency to examine the cultural and social history of eighteenth-century Britain at the expense of the aristocracy which has negated the importance of the elite to such an extent that their role has become increasingly marginalized. Therefore, the editors suggested, increased attention ought to be re-directed towards the aristocratic nature of British society; a viewpoint reflecting more recent

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[48] For example, see *The Political Register*, I (1767), 281-286 and 3544-357, On the Chatham administration see, Thomas, *George III. King and Politician*, I48-179.
[49] Norris, *Shelburne and Reform*, 50-51.
[50] John Brooke, *The Chatham Administration, 1766-1768* (London: Macmillan, 1956) remains a classic and is still useful concerning Chatham's collapse, 68-116. On more recent evaluations see, Marie Peters, *The Elder Pitt*, (London: Longman, 1997) and Jeremy Black, *Pitt the Elder*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) especially 226-300.
[51] *An Enlightenment Statesman*, 24
[52] Ibid., 189.

British historiographical trends.[53] The essays on Shelburne and women, his religious beliefs, finances, and the French connections of the Bowood Circle are all valuable, but the non-aristocratic context of Shelburne's world remains largely unexplored. Following Chatham's collapse, for example, who may have helped to influence Shelburne's political actions, who may have advised him, and, more importantly, did his actions greatly differ from all previously accepted notions of empire? And what of the press; as first minister did Shelburne utilize the press to defend and explain his decisions to a wider audience? Was free trade an issue more widely discussed than usually assumed, and if so, was Shelburne a committed free-trader and how radical were his reformist credentials?

It is not surprising, however, that this new focus on an aristocrat's career has once again narrowed the frame of reference to high politics; of a Namerite world in which only the good and the great influenced each other. In comparison to this vision of aristocratic rule Franklin B. Wickwire had long ago offered an alternative; one in which busy aristocratic politicians, often equally absorbed with their private lives as with their all too often short departmental tenure, relied heavily on their departmental subordinates for information.[54] Another feature of this new study is how it shifted the emphasis away from the transatlantic world to a more Eurocentric focal point. This is particularly noticeable in part two of *An Enlightenment Statesman* which contains four essays on British politics and Shelburne's role in the peace negotiations, particularly Andrew Stockley's essay on Shelburne and his 1782 negotiations concerning the peace.

Part of a larger work, Stockley's essay takes issue with previous historical interpretations of the importance of the 1782 peace preliminaries and, to some extent, Shelburne's own role in these negotiations. For too long, Stockley suggests, the American aspect of the negotiations and the belief that Shelburne and the French minister, the Comte de Vergennes, were in competition for imperial gain has clouded the real achievement underlying their peace settlement. The archival evidence, he added,

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[53] Ibid., 4-5. On this redirection see, for example, J.C.D. Clark, *The Dynamics of Change: The Crisis of the 1750s and the English Party System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and John Cannon, *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
[54] Franklin B. Wickwire, *British Subministers and Colonial America 1763-1783* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), *11*-20.

indicates that at the heart of their negotiations there was a strong desire for future Anglo-French cooperation. Although American issues were an important consideration, of far greater concern for Shelburne, and even his British contemporaries, was the European balance of power.[55] Shelburne personally monopolized the French aspect of the negotiations by keeping his cabinet colleagues in the background while consulting Gerard de Rayneval, Vergennes' undersecretary who had been dispatched to London in September 1782 to assess Shelburne's wish for peace. By clearly saying what de Rayneval wanted to hear, Shelburne's use of charm worked and what is remarkable about the Anglo-French peace terms, Stockley concludes, is not who won what and where, but in the manner they were conducted and the desire they exhibited to establish a future Anglo-French entente concerning European affairs.[56]

Two aspects of Andrew Stockley's narrative invite comment. First, Shelburne preferred working with trusted subordinates rather than his political and social equals and perhaps their input could have been developed more for three of his subordinates, Thomas Orde, Evan Nepean, and Henry Strachey, all had later distinguished careers.[57] Secondly, the role the British press played in the negotiations, or even the role it played in presenting to the reading public the value of the peace preliminaries themselves, is only noted in a footnote as being somewhat irrelevant. Consequently, his discussion of the contemporary British political context is largely limited to purely parliamentary and cabinet interactions.[58]

Shelburne's interest in all things French has been explored, but the origins of his interest in colonial affairs remains relatively obscure. It is even doubtful after he left the Board of Trade whether he remained that

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[55] Stockley, "Shelburne, the European Powers, and the Peace of 1783," in *Enlightened Statesman*, 177-194; 179-180. This essay is largely based upon the second and third chapters of his *Britain and France at the Birth of America*, 51-73, and 74-138.

[56] Stockley, "Shelburne, the European Powers, and the Peace of 1783," 181-182, 185, 188.

[57] For their careers see, James Kelly, 'Orde, Thomas, first baron Bolton (1746-1807)', Elizabeth Sparrow, 'Nepean, Sir Evan (1752-1822)', and S.J. Skedd, 'Strachey, Sir Henry (1736-1810)' in the *ODNB*. Also see, Richard Nelson, *The Home Office, 1782-1801* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1969), 29-31, 81, 141.

[58] Stockley, *Britain and France,* 243, n.201, and 139-176 for his discussion on British politics and the negotiations.